

I023903
-001

Fw: beekill and corn planting

Thomas Steeger to: Norman Spurling

04/20/2012 06:52 AM

Beekill incident report; additional information may follow.

— Forwarded by Thomas Steeger/DC/USEPA/US on 04/20/2012 06:51 AM —

From: Thomas Steeger/DC/USEPA/US
To: [REDACTED]
Date: 04/20/2012 06:49 AM
Subject: Re: beekill and corn planting

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your recent email regarding a beekill you observed over the period of April 7 - 9, involving all 5 of the honeybee colonies you maintain. According to your email, you have not previously witnessed this type of loss in your colonies. You indicate that based on information provided by Dr. Greg Hunt at Purdue University, corn seeding operations in your vicinity may have been associated with your recent honeybee losses. With respect to the seeding activity that you mentioned, am I correct in understanding that the fields were planted on April 5 - 6 and that some spray application was made on April 7? It would be helpful to have some additional information regarding your apiary and the agricultural activity in its vicinity. I would greatly appreciate if you could provide responses to the following questions.

- Approximately how close is your apiary to the agricultural field that was planted?
- Have you had an opportunity to discuss the beekill with the grower?
- Do you know whether the grower was sowing treated seed? If so, do you know what the seed was treated with?
- With respect to the spray application on Saturday, do you know what [chemical] was applied?
- Are any other agricultural fields located in your vicinity? If so, are you aware of any pesticides that may be in use in those areas?
- Is your apiary registered through Drift Watch (<http://www.driftwatch.org/Home/indiana>)?
- How is the general health of your colonies and are you treating for any pests (e.g., varroa mite/hive beetles) and/or pathogens (e.g., Nosema). If so, what treatments are you applying to the colonies?
- What are your bees typically foraging on during this time of year? Do you provide your bees with supplemental food (e.g., Megabee Diet)?
- You indicate that this was the first year you have observed such losses in your colonies. Have your colonies always been maintained in the same location? If so, have agricultural practices changed from previous years?

You indicate that the state has been notified. EPA would be very interested in learning the outcome of their investigation. We are particularly interested in any pesticide residue data they provide.

I apologize for all of the questions; however, it is important that as much detail as possible is provided to document beekill incident reports. This information is maintained in data bases that EPA risk assessors rely on to characterize the potential effects of chemicals. The more information that is provided, the better able risk assessors are to link particular chemicals with effects.

With respect to your question regarding the use of Poncho (clothianidin) as a seed treatment for soybean, I am not the appropriate person to respond to that question; however, I will forward the question to the appropriate risk manager in the EPA Office of Pesticide Programs' Registration Division. However, it is my understanding that seed treatments with insecticides are intended to protect the seed and the early growth phases of the seedling. While clothianidin belongs to a class of pesticides, i.e., the neonicotinoids, that can be persistent, the amount of material on the seed is likely to dissipate into the soil and through the growth of the plant and dilute in the process. The amount of clothianidin present in finished honey resulting from seed treated with clothianidin is uncertain; however, data may be available to address your

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concern.

Thank you again for your willingness to provide this information to EPA. I hope that once the state has completed its assessment you will consider providing the results to EPA.

Sincerely,

Tom Steeger

Thomas Steeger, Ph.D.
Senior Science Advisor
Environmental Fate and Effects Division
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (MC 7507P)
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington DC 20460
(703) 305-5444 (Office)
(703) 305-6019 (FAX)

Mr. Steeger, I was advised by Greg Hunt to r...

04/19/2012 09:13:25 PM

From: [REDACTED]
To: Thomas Steeger/DC/USEPA/US@EPA
Cc: <ghunt@purdue.edu>
Date: 04/19/2012 09:13 PM
Subject: beekill and corn planting

Mr. Steeger,

I was advised by Greg Hunt to report my beekill to you. I have had a small number of colonies (3-8) for 30 years and have never experienced anything like I did on April 7 2012. That was a Saturday and early in the day I had looked at my hives like I often do and all seemed normal. Then in early afternoon I was again in the area of my hives and observed a mat of dead and dying bees in front of not one but all 5 of my hives. Never had seen this before. I had just commented in an email to some friends that this was the first Winter in many years where I had experienced 100% survival over Winter. I called Dr. Hunt on Monday and told him what had happened. His immediate response was about any corn being planted nearby. Since my bees are in a farming area, yes there had been planting on Thursday and Friday, and field spraying being done on Saturday morning. It has been very dry here in Lafayette, IN and my apiary was downwind with huge clouds of dust blowing my way. The bees that were not dead but in the process of dying were not having an easy death. They were having convulsions with some on their backs and kicking their legs. The hive entrance was again covered on Sunday and Monday with dead and dying bees. After that there still were dead bees another 6 or 7 days. I have one weak hive that may not survive, but the four that were strong should be OK.

I reported the incident to the Indiana State Chemist which is nearby at Purdue University. Kevin Neal visited me on April 10 and made out a report and took samples of the dead bees including some which I had collected and frozen. He said it could be a month before any results are known from his lab analysis and information from the farmer.

Question, If bees sometimes make honey from soybeans, how is it allowable to treat soybean seed with Poncho as I found out from reading a seed label?

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Thanks for your time,

[REDACTED]

append to IO23903 -
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Thomas Steeger to: Norman Spurling

04/26/2012 07:28 PM

Additional information on the beekill incident report filed by [REDACTED] on April 20.

----- Forwarded by Thomas Steeger/DC/USEPA/US on 04/26/2012 07:27 PM -----

From: [REDACTED]
To: Thomas Steeger/DC/USEPA/US@EPA
Date: 04/22/2012 09:50 PM
Subject: Re: beekill and corn planting

Dr. Steeger:

Thanks for your rapid reply!

Here are the answers I can supply at this time:

My apiary is about 700 ft to West of one field and 500 ft South of another, both planted at nearly the same time.

My whole area is corn and soybean rotation of field crops. Some of those within one-half mile had earlier been planted in corn. Most corn has the same seed treatments.

I was not registered in driftwatch, but I am now.

My hives are healthy and have not been treated.

No supplemental food has been used. Bees have been foraging on dandelions and other Spring flowers. The fruit and ornamental trees have had mostly finished bloom by beekill date.

My hives have been in same location for the entire 30 year period. Farm crops have also been the same.

I have been in contact with the Office of the Indiana State Chemist. Their investigator Kevin Neal took dead bee samples and is trying to contact the farmer. However, he is on vacation this week, so I will not have more information until later.

----- Original Message -----

From: [Thomas Steeger](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 20, 2012 6:49 AM
Subject: Re: beekill and corn planting

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